

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRUST AND INTEGRITY ACT (LETIA) OF 2015

SUMMARY

The Law Enforcement Trust and Integrity Act (LETIA) takes a comprehensive approach at addressing the issue of police accountability and building trust between police departments and their communities. Tragic events involving officer-involved shootings or use of deadly force have led to numerous criminal investigations and trials, including those in Charleston, Cleveland, and now Baltimore. These events have galvanized the nation's attention and demand a response. President Obama put it correctly when he said, "There is no contradiction between us caring about our law enforcement officers and also making sure that our laws are applied fairly... We want to protect our police officers. We'll do a better job doing it if our communities can feel confident that they are being treated fairly." Congress can help by passing LETIA.

This legislation provides incentives for local police organizations to voluntarily adopt performance-based standards to ensure that incidents of misconduct will be minimized through appropriate management, training and oversight protocols. The bill provides that if such incidents do occur they will be properly investigated. The bill also provides police officers—the vast majority of whom perform their jobs professionally as they put their lives on the line every day to protect their neighborhoods – with the tools necessary to improve community relations and enhance their professional growth and education.

The Act makes seven concrete steps toward improving law enforcement management and misconduct prosecution tools. The NAACP, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, ACLU and National Urban League have endorsed this legislation. Congressman John Conyers introduced the House companion version of LETIA as H.R. 2875 in the 114th Congress.

Title I: Law Enforcement Accreditation

This title requires Attorney General to perform an initial analysis of existing law enforcement accreditation standards and to recommend areas for the development of additional national standards for accreditation of police agencies in conjunction with law enforcement accreditation groups, law enforcement associations, and labor and community-based groups. Additionally, the Attorney General will recommend the adoption of uniform standards – including use of force procedures – for greater community law enforcement accountability. Further, it authorizes the Attorney General to make grants to police agencies for the purpose of obtaining accreditation from certified professional law enforcement accreditation organizations.

Title II: Law Enforcement Development Programs

This Title authorizes the Attorney General to make grants to States, units of local government, Indian Tribal Governments, or other public and private entities, and multi-jurisdictional or regional consortia to study law enforcement agency management and operations. Grants would also help develop pilot programs to implement best practices focused on effective training, recruitment, hiring, management and oversight of law enforcement officers, which would also provide focused data for the development of additional accreditation standards.

Title III: Administrative Due Process Procedures

This Title requires the Attorney General to study the prevalence and impact of any law, rule or procedure that allows a law enforcement officer to delay for an unreasonable or arbitrary period of time the answer to questions posed by a local internal affairs officer, prosecutor, or review board on the investigative integrity and prosecution of law enforcement misconduct.

Title IV: Enhanced Funding To Combat Police Misconduct

This Title authorizes appropriations for expenses related to criminal and civil enforcement activities by the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department, specifying the enforcement against pattern and practice discrimination described in section 210401 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C.A. 14141); and further authorizes appropriations for expenses related to programs managed by the DOJ Community Relations Service.

Title V: National Task Force on Law Enforcement Oversight

This provision requires the Department of Justice to establish a task force to coordinate the investigation, prosecution and enforcement efforts of federal, state and local governments in cases related to law enforcement misconduct. It also authorizes appropriations to support task force efforts.

Title VI: Federal Data Collection on Police Practices

This provision requires each Federal, State, and local law enforcement agency to report to the Attorney General data on the following: 1) traffic violation stops; 2) pedestrian stops and detentions; and 3) the use of deadly force by and against law enforcement officers, including the outcome (injury or death) and the law enforcement agency's justification, if applicable.

Title VII: Medallions for Fallen Law Enforcement Officers

This provision requires the Department of Justice, in cooperation with the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, to create and provide a distinctive medallion to be issued to the survivors of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty or memorialized on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.